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September 28, 2012

Kate Linthicum, Staff Writer
Los Angeles Times
202 West First St.
Los Angeles, CA. 90012

Dear Kate,

Below you will find the Fire Chief's responses to the five questions you submitted on Thursday, September 27, 2012.

They are as follows:

Q) Has the chief read Dr. Eckstein's study that appeared in The Times? What is his opinion of it?

A) Yes. I have been working very closely with our Medical Director to develop a comprehensive solution to the issues identified in this study. Our Departments' Quality Improvement Section performs these internal audits because they are deemed to be clinically important. As the Fire Chief, it is my responsibility to provide the support necessary to correct these problems so that we can provide the best service to the citizens of Los Angeles.

Q) Does the chief support the changes to dispatcher routines proposed by Dr. Eckstein?

A) Absolutely. Our goal is to have our dispatchers confirm the address of the incident (which is more time-consuming with cell phones), rapidly identify the critical patient, immediately dispatch the closest resources, and then provide Pre Arrival Instructions (PAI) without delay.

Q) Earlier this year, the chief said LAFD runs one of the best performing dispatch centers in America. Is that still his opinion? What is his current take?

A) The men and women staffing our dispatch center do a remarkable job each and every day. When the volume of calls increases in the city, as it does every afternoon during rush hour, the 911 call taking phone lines are literally ringing non-stop. These individuals not only have to process the 911 calls, in addition, they must dispatch and manage our resources and maintain coverage with LAFD emergency apparatus across the city. Certainly, we need to improve our performance with regards to the types of calls we identified in our Internal Quality Improvement Audit, and I am committed to seeing this accomplished.

Q) But The developer of your computer nationally-used internationally used program, Dr. Jeff Clawson, says the problem isn't his technology for your firefighters. What's the chief's response?

A) As I have stated previously, I am aware of this issue. However, as the Fire Chief, I am committed to providing the resources necessary to address this challenge.

Q) Why did the LAFD never achieve accreditation from the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch? (This was a pledge made after the 2000 dispatch problems.

A) Due to reductions in our budget and prioritization of field response personnel, we lacked the necessary staff at our Quality Improvement Dispatch Unit (QIDU) to review the allotted number of calls and to provide feedback and additional training. Augmentation of our staff at QIDU will result in the implementation of proposed changes by our Medical Director, so that we can pursue accreditation as soon as possible. We take great pride in the LAFD to provide the highest level of service possible and dispatch is a vital part of what we do. The urgency of this issue is recognized and will be remedied.